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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 001186

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: FRENCH ON FEBRUARY 27 GAERC

REF: STATE 25937

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Pol Deputy delivered points to Pascal LeDeunff, deputy chief of the MFA's CFSP unit, on February 17; poloff followed up with LeDeunff on February 24. According to LeDeunff, the GAERC will issue strong conclusions on Iran, but none on Iraq or the Israeli-Palestinian situation. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Iraq: LeDeunff noted that when he had given his boss the draft French position paper on Iraq for the GAERC to present to French FM Douste-Blazy, his boss had complained that it was identical to the Iraq paper they had drafted for the January GAERC. That, said LeDeunff, is exactly the point -- there is nothing new in Iraq right now except for more violence: the parliament is not yet sitting, and the new constitution is not yet in force. He spoke of the "paradox" the French find in the current situation. While the political process has never been more inclusive, he said, Iraq has never been "closer to civil war." He said that the U.S. and EU must pursue the inclusivity of the political process, and should support the Arab League proposal for a national reconciliation conference and push for a pluralist government. He repeated the French call for fixing a "perspective for the withdrawal of foreign troops" from Iraq, charging that the Iraqi people would not feel they were fully in charge until foreign troops had withdrawn.

3. (C) Iran: On Iran, LeDeunff said that the Council would be issuing "firm" conclusions, while staying away from ultimatums. He indicated that the European Union will continue to say, and French FM Douste-Blazy will insist, that if Iran refuses to respond to the IAEA BOG's appeals before the next BOG meeting on March 6, there will be no other solution than to reinforce the board's authority through the UNSC. LeDeunff said we should also focus on the Russian proposal to Iran, as it could still lead to a possible solution. He noted, in any case, that the French and the Europeans will continue to insist on the necessity of Iran suspending all enrichment activity.

4. (C) On the Israeli-Palestinian issue, LeDeunff said that not much has materially changed since the Quartet statement naming the three requirements for the new Palestinian government. While the PM has been selected, he is not yet in power. "We don't want to lay down new rules before knowing how the new government will look, and what it will say," LeDeunff said. He said the ministers will discuss the disbursement of the European contribution to the World Bank Trust Fund for the Palestinian Authority, and that External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner would find strong French support for that disbursement.

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Hofmann